

helped them hold three elections. We have trained and armed their police and their military.

I say it is time for them to take control of their country.

I have heard my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say that we would bring dishonor to those who lost their lives if we begin to leave Iraq. But ask the families with loved ones over there how they feel. I met with a group in my Newark office with loved ones in Iraq, including a mother who lost her son there. As far as they were concerned, it would bring dishonor to other families if we just stay there with no plans for the future.

So why are we having so much trouble securing Iraq? The answer is clear: The administration has no plan in place to do it. When they tried, we saw misstep after misstep by the civilian leaders in the Pentagon. And the leadership problems at the Pentagon start at the top.

This administration went to war on the cheap: Not enough troops, not enough body armor, not enough help from our allies. I think we are down to a coalition that has very little cohesiveness attached to it. No help. And our troops have paid the price for these mistakes.

There were so many mistakes and miscalculations by the Bush administration that it is hard to believe it at all.

Secretary Rumsfeld said the Iraqis would welcome U.S. troops and that the Iraqi resistance would be limited. He was obviously wrong.

He also failed to build coalitions with our allies. One of the few major allies that did join the coalition was Poland, which sent about 1,600 troops. But they began withdrawing early this year. Half are already gone, and by the end of the year, Poland will have all of its troops out of Iraq. Just this week, the Japanese announced they will withdraw their troops.

We ask, when are we going to start withdrawing our troops?

So far, 16 nations who have provided some assistance in Iraq have withdrawn their troops. The administration's failure to build a real coalition has caused our troops to bear the vast majority of the risk and suffer the casualties.

Mr. INHOFE. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. LAUTENBERG. No, I will not yield. I don't have enough time, I am sorry to say. Perhaps afterwards, the Senator from Oklahoma can use his own time to have an exchange.

Secretary Rumsfeld said the war would be short. He said, "I doubt 6 months." More than 3 years later, we know how tragically wrong that assessment was.

Additionally, Secretary Rumsfeld was also way off on the cost of the war. He said it would cost no more than \$100 billion. But the staggering reality is that it has cost \$320 billion thus far, and we expect it will get close to half a trillion dollars before this year is over.

Now we are experiencing a crisis in military recruiting. But about that, Secretary Rumsfeld is in denial. Whether in public or in private, he claims that recruiting is fine. Well, it is not. Here is the reality: The Army National Guard and Reserve are falling well short of their goals, and the only reason other branches are meeting goals is because the Pentagon has reduced the target numbers.

Eight retired generals have come forward to say what many in the military have been thinking for years, and that is: It is time for a change at the top as well as the recovery of our people back home. One of the generals, General Eaton, who served in Iraq, said the following about Secretary Rumsfeld:

In sum, he has shown himself incompetent strategically, operationally, and tactically, and is far more than anyone else responsible for what has happened to our important mission in Iraq. Mr. Rumsfeld must step down.

But instead of taking a stand like the generals, we have heard our colleagues on the other side of the aisle simply repeating talking points that were handed to them by the Bush administration: "Cut and run"—disgusting words when you look at the reflection of what is intended there.

We know this because the Secretary of Defense sent a Republican briefing booklet to Democrats by mistake last week. This briefing book is a three-ring binder of spin. It contains the same spin that we hear today from the other side of the Chamber.

Instead of developing talking points and spin for Republican Senators, we should concentrate on putting together a plan for our troops in Iraq: For our troops to come home.

I think my Republican colleagues should have stamped that briefing book "Return to Sender" and told the administration that they will think for themselves. That is what I would hope my colleagues across the aisle would do.

I know that they want to protect our troops and I know that they care as much about loss of life. But we have a different approach on it. We need a fresh start, honest leadership, and we are not going to get either one as long as those in charge maintain their positions.

In sum, I think it is time for Secretary Rumsfeld to go, and it is time for our troops to start to go home.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, how much time remains for the Senator from Virginia?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Nineteen minutes and 22 seconds.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I recognize on the floor Senator ROBERTS, Senator BOND, and Senator INHOFE, and Senator KYL intends to come. So with the balance of that time, I will try to allocate it as equally as we can. I think Senator ROBERTS is next in line, so I yield to Senator ROBERTS 4 to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for 4 to 5 minutes.

Mr. ROBERTS. I thank the President and I thank the chairman. I rise in opposition to the amendment offered by Senator LEVIN. I would just tell the Senator from New Jersey that nobody gave me my billet points; I wrote this myself out of conviction, and I know he speaks from conviction as well.

There is nobody in the U.S. Congress, nobody in America that does not want stability in Iraq and to get our troops home as soon as possible. But there is a right way and a wrong way. Last week the Senate voted overwhelmingly against adopting a strategy focused on an arbitrary date for the withdrawal of U.S. forces. We are back again. Despite that lopsided vote of last week, we are again debating yet another withdrawal amendment. By the time we are done, no less than three withdrawal amendments, three messages to our troops, three messages to our adversaries, and three very damaging blows for I think the resolve of this country.

Senator HAGEL brought this up. As a careful reading of the amendment clearly shows, I think we are setting a disturbing and counterproductive precedent. We, the U.S. Senate, are now getting into micromanaging the military and the military's plans and the military's strategy—not the President, not the commanders in the field, but the Senate. This is the same body, by the way, that has a little difficulty trying to decide when to adjourn.

While we may wish otherwise, the blunt truth of it is there is no exit from either Iraq or the global war on terrorism but through success. So in that regard, we did not ask for this war, but in fighting worldwide terrorism, a war that must be successful, we must be willing to use force if necessary and to protect our security and that of our allies or we invite more insurgency, more terrorist acts for the next President, the President after that, and on down the line. So regardless of future policy, current or future Presidents, our ultimate success against terrorism will only be won through resolve.

Let's talk about one thing that has been missing in this debate, and that is consequences. Calling for withdrawal is one thing; facing the consequences of that action and the responsibility for it is another. I fully understand the need and the value of full debate on this issue, but we should do so with the understanding that words do have consequences, and their effect not only influences the intended audience, the partisan base or otherwise, but they also affect the morale of our troops in the midst of war and the terrorists who question our resolve.

Make no mistake: if America leaves—all at once or in stages—our adversaries will rejoice—all at once or in stages.

Last year we received an intercepted letter that Osama bin Laden's deputy sent to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi which urged Zarqawi to prepare for what the terrorists clearly believe will be a U.S.